

April 15, 2014

APR 16 2014

Agenda Item # 8A

Mr. Sean Trippi  
Mr. Bob Fiddaman  
Napa County Planning Commission  
1195 Third Street, Suite 305  
Napa, CA 94559

RE: Yountville Hill Winery/CS2 Wines, LLC

Dear Mr. Trippi,  
Dear Mr. Fiddaman,

I am writing on behalf of my husband, Christian Moueix, and myself. With our Schmidt Ranch, we are the immediate neighbors to the proposed site for the Yountville Hill Winery as well as neighbors to the south at Dominus Estate.

As we were unable to attend the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting and since we will not be at the upcoming meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, we thought to outline our concerns in writing.

We are alarmed by Eric Sklar's proposal for a 100,000 gallon winery on a 10.9 acre property (of which 2.5 will be planted with vines), receiving up to 285 visitors daily (but also hosting up to 58 special events a year), all on a steep hillside requiring Mr. Sklar to ask for variances to the property line, winery setbacks and exceptions to the conservation and viewshed regulations. We believe the project to be both wrong-headed and unrealistic, constituting a dangerous precedent for future large-scale winery projects on unsuitable sites.

A separate letter from my husband will address the feasibility of making wines in such a winery. Here are some immediate concerns that we have:

### Traffic

Traffic studies with their hypothetical scenarios belie the real-life experience of those who live and work along this particular stretch of Highway 29. And while traffic reports speak of daily bottlenecks and jams, they fail to note the high number of near-accidents.

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Along that juncture, each of us has had a close brush or near-miss and the Yountville Hill Winery's present plans will only worsen an already treacherous hotspot for drivers.

The insufficient parking for special events will entail valet parking or shuttle vans from another property. While this may temporarily resolve parking issues on the Yountville Hill Winery site, this certainly does not address the back and forth traffic generated by this imprudent solution. We also question the sustainability of encumbering a separate site that may not forever be available for Yountville Hill's surplus vehicles.

We submit to you that 7400 St. Helena Highway would be a poor location to situate an additional business opened to the public, particularly out-of-town tourists, who may be distracted by the high visibility winery appearing on the horizon.

#### **Water**

Our concerns regarding water usage and disposal are multiple:

- The calculations showing a well pumping 20 gallons per minute will surely be insufficient to meet the needs for a vineyard, winery and sizable visitor traffic, particularly during the peak demands at harvest.
- There are currently no reports on the availability, quantities and quality of water at that site.
- It is important to address concerns regarding any depletion of the aquifer water level and the valley's growing drought conditions.
- At this point, it is unclear how wastewater will be treated and disposed.
- What measures will be taken to protect the creek which runs at the foot of the hillside and eventually goes into the Napa River?

#### **Conservation and Viewshed**

This project flies in the face of present regulations on conservation: cutting down 116 existing trees (including coast live oaks), hauling off 28,000 cubic yards of dirt, making cuts of over 13,000 cubic yards for the building pad, roads and landscape, all which ignore the guidelines for development set forth in the viewshed

ordinance. If this type of project were permitted, it would set an unparalleled precedent for hillside construction throughout the valley.

The environmental effects will have dramatic consequences. A mudslide during construction in such a location could pose serious safety risks and contaminate waterways. Before permitting, a well-adapted erosion control plan should be submitted and approved.

Once construction is completed, over 61,000 visitors a year will be drawn to the highly visible winery. Assured otherwise, we have not yet been given accurate images of how the property, road, parking, light fixtures, etc. will appear from the highway. A model would help to understand the visual impacts. Additional information on the outdoor lighting, a site plan with existing and proposed elements, and story poles with flags are all needed for evaluation.

Moreover, there are concerns regarding noise. Anyone living in this corner of the valley knows all too well how sounds reverberate from one hill to the other. Many of the Yountville Hill Winery's events will take place after 6:30pm. Noise will travel across the valley without significant sound barriers.

#### Setting a Precedent

Looking at the larger picture, we question the sustainability of this type of permitting.

If each of the 389 parcels in unincorporated Napa Valley between 9.9 and 11 acres were developed in such a way, the very nature of the Valley would be transformed, marring the scenic landscapes and hillsides that make this place so exceptional. Already there are presently 13 potentially developable parcels of 10+ acres on Yountville Hill. Would the planning commission be willing to approve a 100,000 gallon winery on each of these parcels?

The precedent-setting nature of this over-scaled project requires a more in-depth review. We respectfully urge you to DENY the numerous variances and exceptions requested for the Yountville Hill Winery.

*Cherise Moueix*

Cherise Moueix

*Christian Moueix*

Christian Moueix